

Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee

Meeting of held on Monday, 14 January 2019 at 2.00 pm in The Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Robert Ward (Chair);
Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Sue Bennett, Mary Croos, Jerry Fitzpatrick and Helen Redfern.
Paul O'Donnell and Elaine Jones

Also Present: Di Smith, Independent Chair Croydon Safeguarding Children Board
Robert Henderson, Executive Director Children Families and Education
Nicky Arrowsmith, Detective Chief Inspector Safeguarding South BCU
Elaine Clancy, Director of Quality and Governance, Croydon Clinical
Commissioning Group

Apologies: Councillor Maddie Henson
Dave Harvey

PART A

1/19 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Councillor Maddie Henson, Councillor Patsy Cummings attended in her absence.
Dave Harvey Co-Optee sent his apologies.

2/19 **Minutes of the previous sub-committee meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019 were signed as an accurate record.

3/19 **Disclosures of interest**

There was none.

4/19 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There was none.

5/19 **Update on the development of Croydon's proposed new safeguarding arrangements**

The Independent Chair of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB), Di Smith gave a presentation on the New Multi-agency Safeguarding

Arrangements for Croydon as directed by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

The three named Statutory Safeguarding Partners (Police, Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group) would assume responsibilities previously held by the CSCB, with the new arrangements to be implemented by September 2019. Their role will be to lead and coordinate with each other to ensure that children and young people in Croydon were safe. Although the statutory guidance did not propose a requirement for education to be included in the partnership, the decision had been made for the Director of Education to be a member of the executive group as education was a key element in safeguarding children and young people. The partnership would also be responsible for publishing an evaluative annual report of the work carried out.

The purpose of the local arrangements was to ensure appropriate analysis of how the agencies worked together to ensure that children and young people in the borough were safeguarded. Information needed to be shared effectively, with learning from serious incidences embedded and that robust challenge took place as appropriate.

The partners will meet regularly and a decision had been made that having secured improvements over the last 18 months following the Ofsted Inspection and the subsequent implementation of the Children's Improvement Plan, not to make drastic changes. Instead it would be used as an opportunity to improve safeguarding arrangements and to build upon what worked effectively by maintaining most of the current arrangements. Other Councils have taken a similar approach.

The partners had agreed to simplified processes through ensuring that their meetings were purposeful and led to stronger relationships with other partnerships such as the Safer Croydon Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Community Organisations.

The proposal was for the partnership to lead by setting the safeguarding agenda and ensuring the relevant arrangements were in place. Meetings would be held throughout the year which will be learning led events to support multi-agency sharing of best practice and opportunity for scrutiny and challenge.

There will be three priority groups chaired by a member of the Safeguarding Partners Executive Group. In the first year they will be responsible for the development and delivery of the following priority areas:

- Neglect
- Vulnerable Young People, and
- Children with Disabilities

The partners would collaborate to ensure that the work around neglect was more effective. Children with Disabilities was an area that had not had enough focus with many issues identified in transitions. In relation to Vulnerable Young People, work was being done to address exploitation. The Vulnerable

Adolescence Review completed by the CSCB was due to be published following the meeting that took place to explore learning as a result of the cases that were reviewed.

A Member asked if there was any reason community groups were not included in the Executive Board. The work they were doing with young people in the borough was making a lot of difference to lives and in preventative work it would be beneficial to have their voice due to the impact they had in the community. Officers responded that the Executive Group would focus on challenges, drive the safeguarding arrangements as per legislation and would be where the detailed forensic conversations would take place. Broader partnership arrangements would include the groups that would be required to drive the aspirations of the partnership and it was anticipated that community organisations would be utilised within the priority groups. Including too many groups in the Executive Board was a problem of the old arrangement in that meetings became too cumbersome to manage.

It was questioned how the Sub-Committee would be able to assess the effectiveness of the partnership and how the partners would be able to hold each other to account. Officers replied that it was not prescribed in legislation to have an Independent Chair but Croydon had chosen to have this element as part of the arrangements in order to have external viewpoint. This structure would lend itself to the opportunity and ability for the partners to challenge each other and for an overseer to ensure accountability.

A Member questioned what mechanisms were in place for scrutiny of the partnership. Officers replied that the annual report that would be produced would be the mechanism to explore evidence of robustness. There would be themes that the Sub-Committee could challenge the partnership on such as the progress of the priorities for each year.

It was further asked how performance management would be measured. Officers responded that the current arrangements involved a learning and development activity with multi-agency staff trained and supported to conduct audits. They had found that by staff critiquing each other's work, it enabled a positive approach to improvement and was a useful way to identify areas of development. The learning that professionals derived from the auditing process was valuable and key to driving changes. The idea behind the proposed broader partnership meetings would be uplifting events with opportunities to report and share good practices and outcomes.

A Member asked what thought has been given to issues such as gambling which should be encompassed under exploitation as it was a child protection concern and not a criminal one due to its addictive nature which could escalate to other serious issues. Officers responded that gambling was not an issue that had been identified as an area of risk but they were of the view that if a young person was identified as being affected, there were pathways of support available. Officers advised that they would follow up with the single point of contact teams to explore if there was an emerging issue. Officers further advised that the work of the CSCB was to share how to keep young

people safe and that partnerships can run campaigns where necessary to promote awareness.

In response to questions about how to appropriately embed learning at all levels of practice and co-ownership as it could be difficult to realise in actuality, officers acknowledged that the cascading of learning had been a challenge for the CSCB. The focus for the past 18 months had been on how to ensure learning was embedded by practitioners on a day to day basis. One of the key issues identified by the serious case review was that all agencies failed to appropriately recognise neglect. A new recording tool had been implemented to ensure that all partners were using the same framework and multiagency audits were being taken to ensure appropriate use and learning was taking place.

It was further questioned how the agencies would improve on identifying risks, effective use of information and sharing data given that the Wood Report identified the critical importance of effective and speedy sharing of information and data to protect and safeguard children with the expectation that unless there is specific legal impediment information must be shared

Officers responded that information sharing was one of the areas of focus for the Executive Board as it was imperative that the arrangements in place to ensure the sharing of information was robust and that the broader section of the partnership, i.e. health visitors, schools, voluntary organisations were confident on information sharing. Additionally, that the ability to pick up on serious issues were strong, intelligence to be triangulated and decisions made appropriately. Creating a culture amongst agencies to be more robust in their responses was an ongoing challenge. It was also pointed out that while information was shared and liaison took place with other authorities or agencies, only information that was proportionate or necessary as part of risk factors were shared.

The Chair thanked officers for their responses to questions and looked forward to welcoming them back at a future date to discuss progress once the safeguarding arrangements has been implemented.

What difference has this meeting made to the children of Croydon

This meeting was an additional one item agenda meeting and the Chair was encouraged by the level of commitment displayed by Members of the Sub-Committee and officers to attending an out of schedule meeting.

On reflection of the meeting itself, it was agreed that additional challenge of the proposed arrangements was worthwhile to remind those involved that new operating systems required appropriate robust challenge. Earlier input was good as it provided a chance to flag areas of concern at the earliest opportunity and this was crucial to improving outcomes for at risk children.

The Sub Committee came to the following CONCLUSIONS:

1. The meeting was helpful as it enabled the Sub-Committee the opportunity to be informed and ask questions about the proposed Multi-agency Safeguarding Children Arrangements.
2. That it was important that the suggested format of the arrangements is acknowledged and endorsed
3. The format agreed evidenced the importance of the Executive Board to retain focus on challenges and drive safeguarding arrangements.
4. That the points raised on effectiveness of learning and co-ownership be acknowledged.
5. It may be beneficial to scrutinise some of the themes of the priorities once the safeguarding arrangements had been implemented.

6/19 **Work Programme 2018/19**

The Chair raised a request for the Sub-Committee to convene a meeting at the end of the cycle of meetings to summarise the items that has been brought forward for scrutiny through the year, share lessons learned with areas identified for improvement and discuss possible items for scrutiny for the coming year.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the work programme for the remainder of the 2018/19 municipal year.

The meeting ended at 3.21 pm

Signed:

Date:

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